

# HUMANITIES

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NETWORK

## Assumed Authority: On Viewing Historical Documentaries

by Marjorie Beale, History, U.C. Irvine

*Editor's Note: Last May, the National Educational Film & Video Festival brought scholars and filmmakers together in Oakland to talk about how documentary filmmakers create believable versions of "reality." This article was adapted from the talk that Dr. Beale presented at the symposium.*

I want to talk about the construction of authority within historical narratives, whether they are written or filmed. Particularly, I would like to consider how documentary films about history assign a particular point of view to the audience, and in so doing, situate that audience with respect to history as a whole.

I'll start with some of the differences between the print medium and film. I'm a practitioner primarily of print, and there are a lot of differences in the way historians go about presenting their material when they're writing and when they're making film. First of all, in an historical narrative that's printed, authority is usually constructed through a variety of textual signs. We have lengthy discussions about the authenticity of sources: where did things come from, can they be confirmed from other sources, arguments about the proper way to interpret them, and footnotes, which insure the verifiability of assertions made. Now, perhaps for obvious reasons, none of these things ever shows up in visual representations of history. For one thing, they'd be an utter visual disaster.

*"These narratives create a coherent whole, a story that becomes natural in the telling – the only story imaginable, at least if the narrator is persuasive."*

One strategy, though, that print historians and visual historians have in common is the use of narrative, particularly emplotment. And so, we have continuous narratives that more or less tell a story. In written history the way this works is that narratives serve to keep people from falling asleep in the middle of strings of analysis. They fit things together in a way that they don't necessarily fit at the level of documents, which come from a variety of perspectives and may not address all the same issues. These narratives create a coherent whole, a story that becomes natural in the telling – the only story imaginable, at least if the narrator is persuasive.

However, when you're reading a book, there's an out. No matter how persuasive your narrative is, you can always put the book down, leave, go look at another book, confirm what this person has to say, or go find a completely different perspective on the issue. When you're reading a book of history, you're never really a captive of the narrator. The narrator has no real hold on you.

But in film, it's a rather different matter. Most of the time – and I'll admit if you're in front of your TV, that's yet another issue – if you're watching in a movie theater, the film has got you. It presents an endless flow of images. You can't get away from them, they tell a story, and they fill up your imagination and make it rather difficult to think of the story in any different terms, at least while you're first encountering the material.

### Film & Speaker Minigrants Available for New Films

Seven recently completed films and videos have just been added to our Film & Speaker Directory. These Council-supported programs explore, in thought-provoking ways, such issues as images of Blacks in prime-time television, the legacy of California governor and U.S. chief justice Earl Warren, and immigrant experiences of Southeast Asians. These films join some 26 other films already available for presentations and discussions statewide.



*From Moving Mountains by Elaine Velazquez*  
"As we Mien say,  
'moving mountains is  
more easy than moving your mind.'"

—Ay Choy Saelee  
*Moving Mountains*

For the past three years, the Council has offered \$500 minigrants to nonprofit organizations interested in screening CCH-supported films and arranging for a humanities scholar to lead a follow-up discussion. Applications for these grants are brief and may be sent in to the San Francisco office at any time. To obtain an updated directory and application, please fill out and mail in the coupon below.



*From Super Chief,  
courtesy of Bancroft Library*



*From Color Adjustment,  
courtesy of Signifyin' Works*

Please send your updated Film & Speaker Directory.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail to: CCH, 312 Sutter St., #601,  
San Francisco, CA 94108.

(Continued on page 2)

# Viewing Documentaries

(Continued from page 1)

This is one essential difference with film. Another is that the narrative conventions of film don't have much to do with the way critical history is written. I'd say film presentations of history often slip into one of two genres: the first is investigative reporting, the second I would call costume drama. The investigative reporting style involves confronting viewers with a kind of eye-witness news take on the past. The most ubiquitous example I can think of is one I'll bet you're all familiar with, that is, those wonderful films we used to watch in high school. Remember Walter Cronkite and *You are There*? We'd have reporters from CBS who would take us to the Boston Tea Party, to the signing of the Declaration of Independence, to the framing of the Constitution, and to other indubitably historic moments in U.S. history. Now, what's interesting to me about these films, outside of their value as wonderful kitsch, is the way they situate their audience. Among other things, they suggest that truth and history can be known through the privileged access that reporters have to a crucial event. In other words, we know things historical as the result of our presence at the event, as though the eye witness has the one real take on what was happening.

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*"Investigative reporting narratives present the world of history as though it had been created by the actions of isolated individuals. . . whose motivations can be understood in contemporary terms – which is to say, they de-historicize history."*

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The second thing these films do is tell a story that's based on character and on the psychological motivations of the individuals. They present us with a history in which big events are dramatized. We have the main players – we have George Washington, we have the signers of the Declaration of Independence – and they wield power, and this is what makes them important, right? Unfortunately, this kind of history usually turns into the history of great White men, or now, at best, the history of White women and the occasional person of color. It also suggests that people who don't have access to power have nothing to do with history, and this is a problem.

Another thing these kinds of investigative reporting narratives do is present the world of history as though it had been created by the actions of isolated individuals, and isolated individuals whose motivations can be understood in contemporary terms – which is to say, they really de-historicize history. They take us to the event, they make us look at what has happened and think about it in our own contemporary terms, without trying to consider what the position of the actors was at the time or how representative they were of the people as a whole. We just end up identifying with these powerful figures, without really thinking about whether they were – shall I use the word hegemonic? – dominant people, or people who rose up from the masses.

The last thing this investigative reporting genre of historical films does is persuade us that this narrative based on the actions of individuals is the only kind of historical story there is to tell. There's no getting away from it, because the sequence of images pushes us to this conclusion. In the end, the effect of this style is to create a profound distance between the spectators and history, whether it's their history or the history of other people. History becomes something that others do. It becomes a kind of timeless past, which we can understand in contemporary categories and where there's no activity of making,

I'd say this effect is very much like the effect that contemporary television reporting has on all of us, when we start to think about political events. We hear all the time that presidential speeches, big disasters, things like this, are historic. Again, the message is that history is something the government does, it's something nature does, it's something acts of God do if we believe in that, but it's not something we do. It's something, whether we're watching or not, that's "out there" happening. If we've managed to tune into the TV, then we are hooked into history; at the very least, we're hooked into media history.

Now, I just have a couple of words about the costume drama approach, which is slightly different. I don't know if any of you have seen the film *The Return of Martin Guerre* or if perhaps you've been to Colonial Williamsburg, but it's kind of the same effect. There's so much attention paid to period detail, to the weirdness of the past, kind of like the Society for Creative Anachronisms or something, the historicity. All we get from these films is a sense of the strangeness of the past and our weird disconnection from it and how irrelevant it is to now. So, once again, the message of this kind of film is that history is something far away from us, something that doesn't have much to do with our everyday lives.

I want to end with a few remarks about strategies in documentary filmmaking that can prevent this kind of distancing of the spectator and involve the spectator. Perhaps you have seen the movie *Thin Blue Line*. This is not exactly a history; it's more a sort of unraveling of a problematic court case. But one thing the director did very nicely was show his viewers documents, and give them a sense of what it's like to try and piece together an historical narrative. He presents all sorts of information. He goes and has interviews and flashes us back, maybe in a heavy-handed way, but still, flashes us back to a lot of different accounts of the same events. He forces us to think critically, in the same way that an historian who's creating a narrative would. Whom do we believe, whose accounts do we balance off against each other, and so on?

Another strategy that occurs to me is that of Alexander Kluge, a German avant-garde filmmaker whose films are sometimes shown around here. Kluge thinks of the film as a kind of construction site. He's made films about German history designed to get people to move away from the vision of history which insists that it's all made by great individuals, and usually great elite individuals, who have

power. Instead, Kluge tries to suggest that history can come from elements of everyday life. In his film *The Female Patriot*, he has a character who is a high school history teacher, who's trying to teach her students new things. She runs out with a tape measure and measures people's feet, as though she can find out something about the history of the body. She digs in the ground. She searches for alternative sources of historical material and does so in a way that involves her students. This, as a filmic strategy, could also be very successful in removing some of this distance, this distance which renders people passive rather than critical.

A last strategy that occurs to me is Trinh Minh-ha's. The film I'm thinking of is *Surname Viet Given Name Nam*, where she pays special attention to the subjectivity of the different people she interviews, and she pays attention to her sources. She tries to set them, place them in settings that have something to do with who they are, their wishes about how to be represented, things like that. This is something that's harder to do in an historical film that works with non-living subjects, but it's a very valuable activity. Instead of having a narrator who has absolute control, you have an attempt to talk to your "documents" – your sources, who are alive and have their own points of view, which are very different from the historian's more distanced one.

The last thing I want to say here is that a long time ago, Walter Benjamin suggested in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History* that when we attempt to make a history, what we're really doing is engaging in a kind of heroic activity, in which we situate ourselves with respect to some moment in the past. And our choice of this moment in the past says a lot about how we envision ourselves in the present moment, how we think about our polity, all sorts of things like that. And I want to suggest that perhaps the most successful critical strategy for viewers who are watching historical documentaries is to make themselves into historians, to look at the documentaries not as though they represent some kind of truth, some pre-packaged narrative which contains information, but instead to look at the documentaries themselves as documents. I'm suggesting we look at them and try to think about the circumstances of their production, the historical moment in which they came into being, and the reasons that the people who put them together might have chosen these particular issues as important.



Stills from *Surname Viet Given Name Nam*, by Trinh T. Minh-ha, filmmaker and author. During the 1991 festival at which Beale spoke, Trinh's later film *Naked Space – Living is Round* was screened.

# Columbus and After: Rethinking the Legacy

by Jim Quay, California Council for the Humanities and Dick Lewis, Oregon Council for the Humanities

The California Council for the Humanities and the Oregon Council for the Humanities present "COLUMBUS AND AFTER: RETHINKING THE LEGACY," a dramatic recreation of four figures from the past 500 years. The project is designed to offer audiences in both states an opportunity to examine the consequences of the Columbian voyages and the cultural encounters they began, here and in the western United States. The California towns that will host the four-day chautauqua program next summer are Santa Barbara, Merced, Santa Clara, and Ukiah.

The four Chautauqua figures – Christopher Columbus, Father Junípero Serra, Jessie Benton Fremont, and Chief Joseph – were chosen to present the widest range of motives for encounters with other cultures and with the land itself. On four successive nights, each will offer a dramatic monologue and answer questions from the audience to provide both an accurate sense of their lives and ways of thinking about cultural encounters as a critical aspect of our shared history.

From Columbus, audiences will hear of Europe's encounter with lands and people across the Atlantic; his motives for voyaging, his experience of new plant, animal and land forms, his understanding of and treatment of the people he encountered, his own sense of what he accomplished.

The next night they will hear from father Junípero Serra, a Franciscan priest who founded the California mission system. Father Serra will describe his missionary purpose – its roots in the Church's spiritual teaching and conversion motive – his encounter with the land, his treatment of the native people, and his own sense of the consequences of the mission system.

On the third night, they will hear from Jessie Benton Fremont about her encounters with the western states: her confidence in the nineteenth century expansion of America west, her problematic relation

to native and Mexican people, her response to the wilderness, places she visited with her husband, and her own sense of herself as a strong and capable woman living in the shadow of a more prominent husband and father.

The last presentation will be by Chief Joseph who, through a narrative about his life and the world of his people, will offer a concluding set of encounters – with the land of his ancestors, with explorers and settlers, with the Christian religion, with the federal government, with the inevitability of war and the finality of defeat.

A reader will be published and made available to those attending the programs. It will amplify the theme of cultural encounters. In addition to essays by each Chautauqua figure, it will contain a generous sampling of articles, essays, poems, stories, plays, photos, illustrations, and other written and visual items, expressing the varied experience of Native-American, Euro-American, African-American, Hispanic-American, and Asian-American peoples in the western U.S.

The "Columbus and After" Chautauqua will be a fitting contribution to the commemoration – the remembering together – of Columbus's voyage, an event that brought the peoples of many lands into contact with one another. In order to be honest, "Columbus and After" will ask audiences to face the costs of violent encounters – the cruelty toward and exploitation of people and land, for instance. But it does so in order to help us celebrate the promise and potential of our current cultural encounters. As Luis Valdez has written,

It is important that Europe came to these shores.

It is important that Africa came to these shores.

It is important that Asia came to these shores.

It is important that there was a pre-Columbian America here waiting to blend and to create something greater than the parts.

It is in this spirit that "Columbus and After" will tour California and Oregon in 1992.

## GRANTS AWARDED

### "Political Dialogue and the Common Good"

#### Californians in Dialogue for the Common Good

*Sponsors: Institute for the Arts of Democracy; Center for Media and Values; and Institute for Global Communications San Francisco*

*Project Director: Howard H. Frederick*

*Amount of Award: \$64,021 in outright funds and \$37,792 in matching funds if \$75,584 is raised in outside gifts*

This collaborative project seeks to identify and promote the skills that are needed to create greater democratic participation in our media-saturated society. It will employ a variety of approaches to train California citizens in critical skills, focusing on media literacy workshops, public discussions among humanities scholars and community members, and a new statewide electronic media network. The project also includes a short film that interviews average citizens, asking how they define democracy, how they can tell they have one, how they feel about politics, and what their own political involvement may be. Public events are scheduled in Palm Desert, San Francisco and Eureka during February, April, and June of 1992.

### Rethinking California's Public Life

*Sponsor: Center for California Studies at California State University, Sacramento*

*Project Director: R. Jeffrey Lustig*

*Amount of Award: \$49,125 in Outright Funds*

This project seeks to take a fresh look at the assumptions underlying California's public life, the background and causes of declining political participation, and possible new directions in governance.

Discussions will involve politicians, business people, scholars, and members of the public in addressing a number of fundamental questions: Can 30 million people be represented by the 120 individuals who make up the state legislature? How have California institutions encouraged or discouraged attentiveness to the common good in the past? How can a society be created that is at once multi-ethnic and democratic?

The project will present a series of public forums, community meetings, and conference sessions; a reader/syllabus on public discourse will be made available to community groups, extending the life of the project. Events are scheduled through February 1992, when the California Studies Conference will devote a series of programs to this theme (see Calendar section on page 7 for details).

## Bill of Rights Exhibit Marks 200 Year Anniversary

"To Preserve These Rights" is an exhibit and related printed materials put together by scholars and artists working with the Pennsylvania Humanities Council. Its attractively designed panels present the language and the importance of America's Bill of Rights, whose bicentennial anniversary is December 15, 1991.

This exhibit is designed for display in courthouses, libraries, city halls, and schools, consisting of twelve lightweight panels that are assembled on three freestanding kiosks. Accompanied by an 84-page *User's Guide*, "To Preserve These Rights" may be purchased for \$150 from the Pennsylvania Humanities Council, 320 Walnut Street, Suite 305, Philadelphia, PA 19106. For further information, please call (215) 929-1005.



# Recognizing the Faces of 'Strength & Diversity'

by Stan Yogi, Program Officer  
California Council for the Humanities

*Note: In 1990, the exhibit "Strength & Diversity: Japanese American Women 1885-1990" drew thousands of visitors to the Oakland Museum. Among them was Stan Yogi, who has since joined the Council's staff.*

A year before her death, I had a lengthy conversation with my paternal grandmother. In my awkward and broken Japanese, I asked questions of this stout, no-nonsense woman about whom I realized I knew very little. My grandmother didn't think her existence important in the course of history, and she thought me *okashii* (odd) for being curious about her life. I persevered, despite her many protests, and succeeded in uncovering some of the cold facts of her life: dates of birth, marriage and immigration; occupations; places of residence—information that enabled me to construct an outline, but little else.

A year later, I made a similar attempt with my mother and met with more success. She was forthcoming in sharing scattered memories of her early life in Salt Lake City, her internment in Manzanar (the camp located in the Owens Valley), and her eventual post-war life in Southern California, where she settled with my father and raised a family after his death. A few months after our conversation, my mother died. Our talk, while it gave me a deeper understanding of her history, still left me with many unanswered questions.

Ironically, my initial understanding of family history came through college Asian American Studies courses in which I learned the history of Japanese immigration to the U.S., subsequent anti-Japanese discrimination, and the wartime internment. My family members' silence about their past, together with the subsequent deaths of my grandparents and the early passing of my own parents, conspired against my developing the personal links with history I had been seeking.

The exhibit "Strength & Diversity: Japanese American Women 1885-1990" provided me an opportunity to recover some of those connections. By placing personal experiences and faces in the stream of broad historic events such as immigration and war, the exhibit enabled me to envision more fully my grandmother and mother's lives. Its many photos, artifacts, and oral histories revealed how Japanese American women were not merely swept along by the currents of history, but shaped and, in some cases, initiated those currents.

Artifacts in the exhibit such as a Japanese wicker suitcase or a formal silk kimono led me to imagine my grandmother as she left her native Okinawa for the foreign country that was to become her home. She didn't share much about her immigration experience, but in hushed tones she confessed that before their marriage my grandfather claimed to be Filipino in order to gain passage to the mainland from Hawaii, where he, like thousands of other Japanese men, was a plantation laborer. This ruse, I gathered, was due to the "Gentleman's Agreement" of 1908, an informal pact between Japan and the U.S. that limited the immigration of Japanese laborers. A loophole in the agreement permitted the immigration of the wives of laborers already in the U.S. Since my grandfather had entered the country, however illegally, he was able to bring a bride.

Like thousands of other Japanese women of the "Issei" or immigrant generation who arrived in the U.S. between 1900 and 1924, my grandmother was not well acquainted with her husband prior to marriage. Arranged marriages were traditional in Japan, and my grandparents' union was no different. It did differ, however, from the prevalent practice of "picture marriages," in which Issei men forwarded to their relatives in Japan photographs of themselves along with information about their situation in



Above: Kame Arakaki Yogi with Jitsutoku Yogi on their Imperial Valley farm. Like many "Issei" women, she worked beside her husband in the fields. This photograph, taken in 1924, was later damaged by fire. At left: The 1944 graduation photo of Tokiko Kuniyoshi, who received her high school diploma in the Manzanar internment camp. She later married the son of Kame Arakaki Yogi. The photo inscription reads, "To Mom — With love, Tokiko S'44." Photos courtesy of Stan Yogi.

America. Unions were negotiated and an Issei man would in turn receive a picture of his betrothed. My grandmother was lucky. She was able to meet her husband before joining him on the trip to the desolate Imperial Valley, where they farmed for more than a decade.

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*"A 1921 Supreme Court decision barred Japanese from naturalization rights, and a 1913 alien-land law limited Japanese land leases."*

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My grandparents leased land from a fellow Okinawan immigrant who had gained citizenship and thus was able to own property. As the exhibit panels explained, this situation was unusual on two accounts: a 1921 Supreme Court decision barred Japanese from naturalization rights, and a 1913 alien-land law limited Japanese land leases. Although my grandparents were able to escape the talons of such legalized discrimination, their daily lives were arduous.

Life for Issei farm women was doubly strenuous. Items in the exhibit such as a hand-held sickle and sewing

patterns written in Japanese reminded me that my grandmother had labored not only in the fields but also in the house. As farm work ended, domestic responsibilities began. One of the exhibit's oral history texts captures the relentless toil of Issei women:

"Sunday was not a day off for Mother. This was the day for laundering and ironing in addition to cooking the three meals. Her chores usually ended at midnight, and she was up again at 4 a.m. to start the fire for breakfast." It was perhaps memories like this that my grandmother felt reluctant to share.

Part of the American-born "Nisei" generation, my mother led a less strenuous life. She recalled going to Jeannette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy movies as a child and dressing in festive kimonos for New Years. She spoke Japanese at home, but English with her friends and classmates. Like most Nisei, who were born between 1910 and 1935, she reached maturity during the war years. My mother didn't talk much about her internment at Manzanar, but she did describe the camp upon her arrival, when it was not yet complete. She recalled the unfinished wood-and-tarpaper barracks and the relentless dust. She commented on the lack of privacy in the latrines and the bad food served in mess halls. She recalled sewing camouflage nets during her free time and learning to jitterbug at camp dances.

Despite their internment in desolate camps scattered across the nation, Nisei women like my mother attempted to maintain a semblance of pre-war regularity. A high school yearbook and graduation announcement displayed in the exhibit reminded me that my mother graduated from high school in the artificial confines of Manzanar. It was sad to note that this milestone in my mother's life took place in camp, and it was ironic to realize that Nisei attempted to recreate the social system of the very society that excluded them and denied them their constitutional rights, solely on the basis of race.

One of the more haunting artifacts in the exhibit speaks to the transformation of significant personal events such as marriage within the context of internment. A handful of nails bunched together and made to resemble a bouquet of flowers was accompanied by this oral history text:

"I remember one of my friends got engaged and married in camp. We gave her a shower. What we gave her were carpenter nails because they were so precious. We went to the dump site and around the construction of new barracks, and sifted through the sand for them... I wrapped them up in crepe paper so they resembled flowers and gave them to her. She was very touched by it because she had to build furniture from scrap lumber for her new place."

Outside the universe of the camp, a handful of nails would probably not be considered an appropriate gift. Within the confines of camp, however, the gift of nails takes on tremendous meaning, signifying not only the stark physical needs of the camp but also Nisei women's determined efforts to maintain traditions and decorum in an environment that tended to work against social cohesion. The bouquet of nails was all the more poignant because I could imagine my mother as the young and grateful bride.

The post-war years saw Issei and Nisei women spread across the country. My mother, for example, feared lingering anti-Japanese sentiment on the west coast and returned to Salt Lake City. My paternal grandmother and her family farmed in an Arizona community adjacent to the camp in which they were interned. Although anti-Japanese feelings persisted in the post-war years, the 1950s and 1960s brought the dismantling of legalized discrimination against Japanese Americans. A certificate of naturalization included in the exhibit attests to the 1952 act that gave Issei citizenship rights. After living most of her life in the U.S. my grandmother could at last become a citizen.

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*"Wartime internment had left many Nisei feeling that they had to assimilate, to become inconspicuous to avoid being singled out again."*

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The easing of employment and housing discrimination against Japanese Americans brought many Nisei to middle-class standing. This drive toward middle-class status was accelerated by the aftereffects of the wartime internment, which had left many Nisei feeling that they *had* to assimilate, to become inconspicuous in order to avoid being singled out again.

The attempt to escape a history of discrimination was not without its sacrifices. "Sansei," or third generation, women, while benefitting from improved financial status and opportunities created by the women's and civil rights

movements, often knew little of their family and collective past. In one of the exhibit's oral history texts a Sansei woman comments:

"Our parents taught us to be like white middle class Americans because they tried so darn hard after camp to become economically and educationally successful so that we would have the best of both worlds... But with that we lost something... We lost our language and some of our Japanese culture."

It was this same sense of loss that motivated me to talk with my grandmother and mother.

Nisei efforts to shield their children from their history – and also protect themselves from painful memories of the past – ironically increased the desire of many Sansei to recover that history. After learning of the wartime internment, as well as the discrimination their grandparents faced, many Sansei were instrumental in initiating a nationwide movement to obtain monetary redress for Japanese Americans interned during the war. As the exhibit points out, many Sansei women, with experience garnered through involvement in the women's, civil rights, and anti-war movements, were leaders in a drive that resulted in the passage of a law insuring reparations and a governmental apology to internees.

My grandmother and mother did not live to receive redress, or to see the museum exhibit specifically devoted to Japanese American women, something that probably would have surprised them. Although neither woman's name appears in the pages of history books or in the exhibit itself, "Strength & Diversity" preserves their histories and experiences. I like to think that would make them happy.

## Smithsonian to Offer Exhibit on Japanese American Women's History Nationwide

The Smithsonian Institution's Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) has announced it will soon offer the exhibit "Strength & Diversity: Japanese American Women 1885-1990" to museums nationwide. This exhibit, which CCH helped to fund, was sponsored by the National Japanese American Historical Society in San Francisco.

The exhibit tells the diverse stories of three generations of women, from the Issei picture brides who left Japan for an uncertain future, to their Nisei daughters who endured with their parents the internment and prejudice imposed upon them during World War II, to a third and even a fourth generation of Japanese American women. Both the changes and the commonalities over time are explored through photos, oral histories, literary works, and artistic expressions.

The exhibit will include, as it did during its 1990 showing at the Oakland Museum, a collectively created history quilt, "The Threads of Remembrance," which depicts in three panels themes of Japanese American women's lives during the past century.

During 1991, the exhibit has been appearing in Hawaii and Oregon. The "Strength & Diversity" tour as a SITES exhibit begins in 1992.



"Threads of Remembrance" quilt was created collectively to depict aspects of Japanese American women's experiences during the past 100 years. Photo by Rick Rocamora, courtesy of National Japanese American Historical Society.

# CALENDAR OF HUMANITIES EVENTS

*Please Note: These dates and times should be confirmed with local sponsors. These listings are often provided to CCH long before final arrangements are made.*

## EXHIBITS

Through  
Nov. 4

**"AIDS and the New Community,"** sponsored by the Maitri AIDS Hospice presents a photographic exhibit on the compassionate care of people who have AIDS, featuring life at the Maitri Hospice run by San Francisco's Hartford Zen Center. At the Grace Cathedral, 1051 Taylor St., San Francisco, open daily from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. (415) 863-0508

Through  
Nov. 24

**"Return to Gold Mountain"** is a photographic exhibit sponsored by the Asian American Studies program of UC Davis, appearing at the Museum Center of Marshall Gold Discovery Historic State Park in the town of Coloma. The photographs depict the Chinese mining experience in California. Contact Peter Leung at (916) 752-2356 for details.

Oct 26 -  
Dec. 4

**"Official Images: New Deal Photography"** SITES exhibit will appear at the Sutter County Community Memorial Museum, 1333 Butte House Road, Yuba City. (916) 741-7141

Oct 26 -  
Jan. 5

**"Russian America: The Forgotten Frontier"** exhibit opens at the Oakland Museum. This is the first comprehensive exhibition on the history of Russia's involvement in colonizing North America. Located at 1000 Oak Street, Oakland. (510) 273-3842

## 1992

Jan. 10 -  
Mar. 15

**"Ladies of Good Social Standing"** is an exhibit about the history of the Kingsley Art Club, which celebrates its 100th anniversary in 1992. At the Sacramento History Museum, 101 "I" Street, Sacramento. (916) 449-2057

Jan. 4 -  
Feb. 9

**"Official Images: New Deal Photography"** SITES exhibit travels to the Redding Museum and Art Center, 56 Quartzhill Road, Redding. (916) 225-4155



At left: Instruments used by Chinese miners in the 1850s, from the exhibit, "Return to Gold Mountain." Although the miners faced harassment by Whites and the discriminatory Foreign Miners' Tax, as many as 20,000 Chinese miners once panned for gold in California's foothills. At right: Program participants Peter Leung and Douglass Yee in front of the Wah Hop Store in Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park, the site of a day-long festival commemorating the Chinese American pioneers. Photos by William Sheldon Peck.

## EVENTS

Oct. 26

**"Who's Helping Who: The Volunteer Experience"** is the final symposium sponsored by the Maitri AIDS hospice, from 2 to 5 p.m. in Gresham Hall at the Grace Cathedral, 1051 Taylor Street, San Francisco. (415) 863-8508

Oct. 26

**"Russian America: The California Connection,"** is a symposium exploring the history of Russian influence in America. From 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Oakland Museum's James Moore Theater. (510) 273-3842

Oct. 31

**"Thomas Jefferson,"** portrayed by Rhodes scholar Clay Jenkinson, comes to Santa Clara University. Jenkinson will present the third American president's utopian vision and discuss contemporary realities with the audience. Call (408) 554-4533 for location and time.

Nov. 1

**"Thomas Jefferson,"** portrayed by scholar Clay Jenkinson, travels to San Mateo County, appearing at 7 p.m., College of San Mateo Little Theater, 1700 W. Hillsdale Blvd., San Mateo. (415) 349-5538 or 345-1221

Nov. 2

**La Ofrenda: The Days of the Dead,** a film that examines the significance of this traditional Mexican holiday, will be screened at 6 p.m., USC's Norris Theatre, near Jefferson Boulevard and McClintock Street, Los Angeles. (213) 740-3339

Nov. 4

**Color Adjustment,** a video about how network television has both reflected and absorbed divisive racial conflicts, will be presented at 4 p.m. at the Roxie Cinema, 3117 16th St., San Francisco. (415) 552-8760

Nov. 6

**"Tagged As Outlaws: A Social Topography of L.A. Street Culture"** is a talk by author Mike Davis at New Langton Arts, 1246 Folsom St., San Francisco. Call (415) 626-5416 for time.

Nov. 11

**"Dialogue: The Dramatic work as Historical/Cultural Document"** presents the third of five lectures preceding the play *Oedipus Trilogy* by Sophocles. At the Lyceum Theatre, Horton Plaza, San Diego. Contact Kirsten Brandt at (619) 231-3586 for more information; call the box office (619) 235-8025 for ticket information.

Nov. 14

**Stories of Change,** a film that tells about four women seeking to take control of their lives, will be shown at the Film Arts Foundation Film Festival, DeYoung Museum, Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, 7 p.m. (415) 552-8760 (Bob Hawk)

Nov. 22

Avital Ronell, of U.C. Berkeley's Comparative Literature Dept., delivers a talk on **"Atopos."** Part of the series, "Topographies: Talks on Postmodern Culture" at New Langton Arts, 1246 Folsom St., San Francisco. Call (415) 626-5416 for time.

# CALENDAR

## HUMANITIES NEWS

Nov. 24

At "Encuentro: Mexico in Los Angeles," scholars, artists and activists will explore contexts in which Los Angeles is a Mexican city and how "mexicanismos" surface in L.A.'s development patterns, literature, aesthetics and politics. Events in English and Spanish at Keck Theatre, Occidental College, 1600 Campus Road, Eagle Rock in Los Angeles, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. (213) 259-2849



The "Encuentro: Mexico in Los Angeles" conference is one of many city-wide events about Mexican art and culture called, "Artes de Mexico." Photo montage by Ernesto Collosi, courtesy of the California Museum of Latino History.

### 1992

Jan. 13

"Dialogue: The Dramatic work as Historical/Cultural Document" presents the fourth of five lectures preceding the play *Made in Lanus* by Nelly Tiscornia. At the Lyceum Theatre, Horton Plaza, San Diego. Contact Kirsten Brandt at (619) 231-3586 for more information; call the box office (619) 235-8025 for ticket information.

Jan. 24

Kobena Mercer of U.C. Santa Cruz, delivers a talk as part of the series, "Topographies: Talks on Postmodern Culture" at New Langton Arts, 1246 Folsom St., San Francisco. Call (415) 626-5416 for time.

Feb. 6 - 8

"Dancing on the Brink," the 1992 California Studies Conference, presents a series of talks on the theme "Rethinking California's Public Life." Keynote speaker will be poet Gary Snyder. Events begin on Thursday at 2 p.m., continuing all day on Friday and Saturday, at the Sacramento Holiday Inn, Capitol Plaza. (916) 273-6906

## Minigrants Support Programs Statewide

"Return to Gold Mountain: A Chinese American Pioneer Festival" is an exhibit with accompanying events at the Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park in Coloma. The Asian American Studies Department at U.C. Davis received a \$1,438 minigrant for the project. (See Calendar section for details.)

The Peninsula Library System received a \$1,500 minigrant for "Roots of War," a ten-week reading-and-discussion group that will take place at the County Correctional Honor Camp. Beginning in November, the series will explore the cultural and historical context of the Persian Gulf War.

A \$1,490 minigrant will support a half-hour documentary on Native American medicine women in California, sponsored by Global Vision of San Francisco. The interviews will focus on healing traditions and practices. Video and audiotapes will be aired over local public access and public radio stations.

The Sacramento History Museum will present an exhibit on the social role of affluent women and their social clubs in the late nineteenth century. The \$1,500 minigrant will allow a guest curator to select materials from the archives of the Kingsley Art Club, founded by fifty "ladies of good social standing" in 1892, which still presents artists' talks and scholarships to the public. The exhibit opens in January 1992.

The project "Patterns of Life: Social History through American Quilts" will offer an exhibit and many accompanying public programs on quilts, quilt making, and quilt makers. For these events beginning in early 1992, the Riverside Municipal Museum received a \$1,500 minigrant.

"Boundaries in Question" was a three-day conference on feminism and its place in the academy and the community. Supported by a \$1,500 minigrant, the Beatrice M. Bain Research Group at U.C. Berkeley conducted the program in October.

In October, the Italian Cultural Society of Sacramento presented a lecture entitled, "A Portrait of the Italians in

America." The talk accompanied an exhibit entitled, "Family, Culture and Community," presented in cooperation with the Sacramento History Museum. The minigrant award was \$400.

Mother Jones International Fund for Documentary Photography received a \$1,500 minigrant to sponsor a panel discussion on social aspects of photography. The program, "Culture Clash: Representations of New and Old Americans," was held in San Francisco during September.

The Falkirk Cultural Center in San Rafael received \$1,500 to present "Rewriting the Cannon," a forum accompanying its exhibit on elitism and sexism in the art world, "Guerilla Girls Talk Back." The events took place in August.

In September, The Friends of the Lodi Library presented a lecture on early migration to the region, beginning in the 1890s. Scholar Sally Roesch Wagner traced the migration of Germans from Russia through South Dakota and then to Lodi and other areas of the Central Valley. The minigrant award was \$500.

A \$1,500 minigrant supported the symposium, "Tibet: Universal Values from a Traditional Culture," which also took place in September. The project, exploring topics such as images of the feminine and Buddhist ecological perspectives, was sponsored by the John F. Kennedy University, Orinda, together with U.C. Berkeley's Institute of Buddhist Studies of the Graduate Theological Union.

*News from Native California* magazine of Berkeley received a \$1,500 minigrant to sponsor a conference, "Response to the Quincentennial." The conference, held in mid-July, investigated ways that upcoming celebrations of Columbus's arrival in the New World could be enriched by Native American perspectives.

### 2 Re-Presentation Grants Awarded

The Northern California Center for Afro-American History and Life has received a \$2,500 re-presentation grant to mount an expanded version of its exhibit, "Visions Toward Tomorrow," which drew some 50,000 visitors to the Oakland Museum in 1989. The new showing at the center in Oakland included materials on the Gold Rush era and life in the 1970s. Discussion groups were held on topics such as "Early Entrepreneurship," "The East Bay as a Cultural Hub," and "Black Churches as Social Institutions." The exhibit reopened in July 1991.

The Asian Heritage Council of San Jose has received a grant of \$2,500 to present a panel discussion at the Triton Museum in Santa Clara, to accompany the CCH-funded exhibit "Completing the Circle: Chinese-Americans and the Arts in California." The events are scheduled for re-presentation in fall 1992.

*Delilah Leontium Beasley, the Oakland journalist who documented Black life in the East Bay in her book The Negro Trail Blazers of California, published in 1919. Photo part of the "Visions Toward Tomorrow" exhibit, courtesy of the Northern California Center for Afro-American History and Life.*



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## NEXT PROPOSAL DEADLINE: April 1, 1992

Proposals must conform to the 1992 Program Announcement. Send 10 copies to the San Francisco office by the due date.

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# HUMANITIES

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# NETWORK

## Looking Back: Reflections on History



Clem Abers (National Archives)

Grant Din

Above photos from the exhibit "Strength & Diversity: Japanese American Women, 1885 - 1990," soon to be made available nationwide by the Smithsonian Institution. Photos courtesy of the National Japanese American Historical Society.

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